



San Diego City Attorney **MICHAEL J. AGUIRRE**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 30, 2008

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SON OF LOCAL SMOKE SHOP OWNER SENTENCED TO JAIL AND SHOP OWNER RECEIVES PROBATION *BOTH CONVICTED OF 23 COUNTS OF SELLING NARCOTIC PARAPHERNALIA*

San Diego, CA—San Diego Superior Court Judge Howard Shore sentenced the owner of the ABC Smoke Shop, Joandark Kassab to five years probation and her son Steve Kassab, who is also the store manager and clerk, to thirty (30) months in jail. The court also imposed against each defendant several thousand dollars in fines and penalties.

In April, both were convicted by a jury of 23 counts of selling methamphetamine and crack cocaine pipes.

“This is a victory for the community, which we hope serves as a deterrent to other stores selling drug paraphernalia,” said City Attorney Michael Aguirre. “I am also very proud of the hard work of the City Attorney’s Drug Abatement Response Team (DART) and the San Diego Police Department.”

Last week the defendants were arrested and remained in custody under a no bail warrant because they failed to appear in court for their sentencing on two prior dates.

According to San Diego Deputy City Attorney Makini Hammond who prosecuted the case, the guilty verdicts covered a two-year period involving several undercover purchases of methamphetamine and rock cocaine pipes by San Diego police officers.

In July 2006, Steve Kassab was arrested for selling narcotic paraphernalia and a search warrant was executed resulting in the seizure of over 600 methamphetamine and rock cocaine pipes. While awaiting trial on these charges, the ABC Smoke Shop continued to illegally sell narcotics paraphernalia even after DART sent a formal “Cease and Desist” letter to Joandark Kassab in March 2006.

On December 19, 2007, Steve Kassab was again arrested for selling narcotic pipes as part of an extensive undercover operation conducted by the San Diego Police Department which targeted smoke shops throughout the city.

The ABC Smoke Shop located at 4101 Market Street has been the focus of community anger since its initial opening in July 2005. At that time, a rally was held to protest the sales of narcotic paraphernalia

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from this establishment. “We’ve been in this struggle for a long time,” said Dr. Cleo Malone, Executive Director of Palavra Tree, a drug rehabilitation program. “We’ve made a great step towards helping to save our young people from drug addiction and I thank the community, police and the City Attorney’s Office.”

This is the second time that Steve Kassab has been convicted of selling narcotics paraphernalia. On December 23, 2002, Steve Kassab was convicted of two counts for selling and manufacturing “brown bags” or rock cocaine smoking kits from his family’s liquor store, Mr. D’s, immediately adjacent to the ABC Smoke Shop. Steve Kassab’s father, George Kassab, was also convicted of selling drug paraphernalia in 2002.

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